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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SINGAPORE 000753

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [BM](#) [SN](#)  
SUBJECT: ASSK VERDICT: SINGAPORE TEMPERS DISAPPOINTMENT  
WITH NOD TO "SIGNIFICANT GESTURES."

REF: A. SECSTATE 83598  
[1](#)B. SINGAPORE 566

Classified By: EP Counselor Joel Ehrendreich for reasons 1.4 (b)(d)

[1](#)1. (C) Economic-Political (EP) Counselor urged Singapore to publicly express deep concern over Aung San Suu Kyi's (ASSK) conviction and to press the Burmese government to release ASSK without conditions (Ref A), during a meeting August 12 with MFA Southeast Asia Director Peter Tan. Tan immediately referred to MFA's press statement on the verdict, noting that while Singapore is disappointed in the guilty verdict, it is heartened by the "significant gesture" of the Burmese leadership to loosen the restrictions placed upon ASSK as part of her house arrest. The junta's decision to continue ASSK's house arrest while loosening her restrictions is a nod to the concerns of the international community, Tan said. On the other hand, the leadership does not want ASSK to contest their authority and keeping her out of the public until the elections are over is a way to alleviate that concern, he added. Tan inquired as to whether the verdict would have a negative impact upon the USG's policy review towards Burma. EP Counselor replied that while the policy is still under review in Washington, clearly we were disappointed by this verdict. Referring to Senior Minister Goh's visit to Burma in June, where he reportedly delivered a frank personal message to the junta that emphasized the seriousness with which the international community views the situation (Ref B), Tan intimated that Singapore will continue to press Burma privately for more significant progress.

[1](#)2. (C) Tan suggested that the junta's "gesture" may be an opportunity for the international community to nudge Burma along the road towards allowing fair and transparent elections in 2010. The Europeans' call for more sanctions would not have a positive affect upon the junta, who are unlikely to respond to increased pressure, Tan said. Tan suggested that the end result of the ASSK trial and verdict is a return to the status quo. Had the incident not occurred, the junta would have still found a way of extending ASSK's house-arrest, and the current outcome is likely the best that we could hope for, he said. He added that it is unreasonable to hope the junta would unconditionally release ASSK, although he suggested the possibility that after the 2010 elections, by which point the junta will have consolidated its power, the remainder of ASSK's sentence may be commuted.

[1](#)3. (C) EP Counselor also expressed support for the Malaysian Foreign Minister's call for an "urgent" meeting of ASEAN Foreign Ministers to present the Burmese with a strong, unified message from ASEAN about the damaging effects of their actions. Tan replied that while the ASEAN Chair had already issued a statement expressing deep disappointment

with the verdict, he thought it unlikely ASEAN would issue any strong condemnations of the verdict. ASEAN statements require consensus, he said, and Vietnam and Thailand for example, would not likely support anything other than a weak statement.

14. (C) An example of the tightrope Singapore walks on the Burma issue is illustrated in an Op-Ed published in today's government-influenced Straits Times. The Op-Ed subtly mocks the theater of the ASSK trial, and suggests that the junta allow ASSK to participate in the 2010 election process, saying her participation is necessary for the vote to be taken seriously both in Burma and abroad. However, the Op-Ed then emphasizes that the "National League for Democracy and exile groups have to acknowledge that the military will be a big part of a future participatory form of government. This is not negotiable."

15. (U) The text of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs statement on the ASSK verdict is included below:

Begin text

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"We are disappointed to learn that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was found guilty and sentenced to three years' hard labour. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi did not plan to violate the terms of her house arrest, and the intrusion into her house was by a person who appears to be of unsound mind.

We are however happy that the Myanmar Government has exercised its sovereign prerogative to grant amnesty for half

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her sentence and that she will be placed under house arrest rather than imprisoned.

We are heartened that Minister of Home Affairs Major General Maung Oo had announced that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi will be allowed to see doctors and nurses, communicate with her party, watch local television channels, read local newspapers and journals, and can receive visitors with the government's permission and that there is a possibility that she could receive amnesty for the remainder of her sentence.

These are significant gestures by the Myanmar Government. We hope that the Myanmar Government will allow Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to participate in the political process as soon as possible.

A meaningful dialogue between the Myanmar Government, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all other political groups in an open and inclusive process of national reconciliation is the only hope for the long-term political stability of the country."  
End Text.

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